

Sensing a Call to Missions?

Use These 4 Starting Blocks

By Paul Davis



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We cannot afford to be passive or haphazard about the will of God. We must pursue it directly and methodically.

Josh and his wife Megan were shocked by the missions team at their growing, gospel-centered church.

They have never felt so affirmed in their spiritual gifts.

First, they received a [personal invitation](#) to attend the team's next monthly meeting. They arrived a little early and immediately sensed a palpable energy in the room. Josh felt like an honored guest. Megan was immediately encircled by several women on the team.

The first order of business was [prayer](#). The entire team prayed specifically for Josh and Megan, thanking God for the gifts he had given them and their deep engagement in ministry. After prayer, the conversation instantly turned serious.

“Josh and Megan,” began one of the older team members, “We have been watching and praying for you for some time now. We are meeting with you because we want you to know that we see Holy Spirit-filled ministry gifting in your lives. Your family's testimony in our church is one of servant hearted, generosity, and we have seen you both teach and lead in very effective ways.”

Josh and Megan felt a humble nervousness as the team leader jumped in. “Josh and Megan, you are here today because we want you to know that we have been praying for you, and if you are sensing God's leading in your life towards a full time missions opportunity, we would enthusiastically support you. In fact, this meeting is our way of encouraging you to pursue missions.”

How encouraged do you think Josh and Megan felt as they drove away from that meeting?

A conversation like that would certainly launch Josh and Megan into deep conversations about missions. But as they begin thinking

through next steps, where were they to turn? Who could they trust to give them biblical, doctrinally-sound, wise counsel—and with so many questions to be answered, where would they even start?

Having spent two decades as a pastor, I've asked these questions of myself and the individuals we sent from our church. Through this, I have found four key starting blocks that are critical to launching new workers out on mission.

1. Calling

The best and first key starting block is calling.

Are you gifted to be a cross-cultural missionary? More importantly: if so, how do you know? These questions must have objective answers. One does not become a missionary because they “feel” like it. One becomes a missionary because God has given them gifts, experiences, equipping, and resources. The need for missionaries does not constitute a call to missions—but giftedness does.

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A modern translation of Luke 12:48 reads, “If God has been generous with you, he will expect you to serve him well. But if he has been more than generous, he will expect you to serve him even better” (CEV). To answer the question of calling is a matter of stewarding visible, evident gifts God has already deposited into the called one.

2. Information

The second key starting block is information. You would not begin any new job without learning the ins and outs of the industry. Cross-cultural ministry is little different. If you are entering a new world, you must prepare yourself.

Research multiple agencies and organizations. In addition to consulting your pastor and missions committee, consider consulting pastors of other churches that are excelling in cross-cultural ministry.

Find great books as resources on missions, from John Piper’s *Let the Nations Be Glad* to Andy Johnson’s *Missions: How the Local Church Goes Global*. Listen to sermons from [CROSS](#). Research missiology online. Reading our [blog](#) is a great place to start, as is listening to [The Missions Podcast](#) to understand recent trends in missiology, current opportunities, and the biblical foundation of missions.

Events like ABWE’s [24-Hour Demo](#) or courses like Perspectives are designed a crash-course on the world of missions for those who are serious about choosing a sending agency.

Talk to a [mobilizer](#) who can coach you through the process of pursuing missions. A wise counselor can walk you through the key decision-points before you launch into ministry overseas.



3. Affirmation

The third starting block is to surround yourself with people who love and support goers.

Seek counsel and direction from your [pastor](#), church, or small group early in the process. God has created biblical lines of authority specifically for times like this. Those pursuing missions need biblical community for equipping, encouragement, support and accountability.

After talking to your pastor, involve others who know you well—small group leaders, family members, seminary professors, mentors—and ask them hard questions like, “What do you see in my life do you think would have to change to prepare me for the mission field?” As God confirms your calling, ask them to join your prayer team before you’re ever a missionary raising funds and building a support network.

You’ll also want a cheerleader in your corner, so connect with a missionary you know or a mobilizer to help find your unique fit for cross-cultural ministry. A coach like this can meet with you one-on-one visits so each applicant can make sure we are the best fit for their ministry goals.

We have been commanded by our Lord and Savior to go into all the world and proclaim the gospel. Some are gifted as senders; others, possibly including you (if you have read this entire article), sense the call and the gifts to go. An organization like ABWE can help. But we cannot obey God’s leading alone.

4. Partner

The fourth starting block is to find a mission partner you can trust.

Partnership is important at every point in the starting process, but formalizing a partnership with a missions agency will provide the unique opportunity to team up with people who have dedicated their lives to the effort of missions. For every risky frontlines operation, a team of backend support is critical. And for a believer taking a step

towards cross-cultural ministry, finding a team of caring, experienced former overseas workers, pastors, and other ministry experts and servant-leaders.

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I am privileged to lead an organization that embodies these ideals. We began as an association of Baptists more than 90 years ago, and we have grown into a family of about 400 like-minded sending churches with shared desire to reach the lost and plant gospel-centered churches around the globe. Our ministries reach across more than [84 countries](#), enabling us to match prospective missionaries to the ministry, platform, and field to which they sense God's call. We prioritize the [training and equipping](#) of national leaders to ensure that effective, long-term discipleship happens. We work hand-in-hand with missionaries and sending churches to ensure that you are supported and equipped with a deep [theological understanding](#), practical financial and ministry help, [donor support](#), and unified teammates who will work beside you in the Great Commission.

Whichever agency you choose, you want a partner you can trust to manage your [financial matters](#) with absolute integrity. Our team provides missionaries and churches with dozens of [practical services](#) so they can focus on their ministry. It is critical you find an organization or agency that will enable you to focus on making disciples and not on the endless complications of navigating foreign governments, finding insurance, managing funds, and managing the logistics of life overseas.

If you're a church leader and someone you know is considering their call, or if you find yourself reexamining your career in these strange days, use this time to work to seek the Lord and evaluate your giftedness toward cross cultural ministry.

We are praying every day that the Lord of the Harvest would send laborers into the field. Is he sending you? [Take your first steps here.](#)

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Paul Davis is president of ABWE. Prior to his appointment in 2017, Paul served as senior pastor at Calvary Baptist Church in Holland, MI. He attended Liberty University and Dallas Theological Seminary and holds a master's degree from Grand Rapids Theological Seminary. Paul and his wife, Martha, have been married for 28 years, and have both served in numerous roles in Christian ministry and education. They have four young-adult children. Follow Paul on [Facebook](#).

